

CHAPTER FIVE: A DIAGNOSTIC ANALYSIS OF THE MAJOR ISSUES FROM INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED BY THE TASK TEAM

Chapter Five of the Report into irregularities in the appointment of posts in education is a record, with commentary, of what the Task Team was told. Four and sometimes more layers of officials and authorities were listened to, and they and all Teacher unions in each Province⁶³ were given opportunity to express their concerns about the ways in which education appointments are being made. This has been captured with commentary in this previous Chapter.

The brief commentaries in that Chapter 4 reflect responses by the Task Team to what it heard. However, in seeking to reflect accurately and fairly what the Task team was told, the voices of our interlocutors have been presented without sufficient analysis to bring together perspectives on the major issues for consideration. Therefore Chapter 5 has selected four aspects related to the matter of the appointment of teachers for closer scrutiny.

The Task Team has understood its brief to be to determine whether there is substance in the original allegations about the buying and selling of posts and what should be done to reduce opportunity for such forms of corruption, and to make recommendations which could have implications for policy to the Minister.

The analysis which follows speaks to that brief.

The four major areas for analysis are:

1. The buying and selling of posts in education.
2. The relationship between the Department of Basic Education and Teacher unions.
3. School Governing Bodies and their future.
4. Some factors that have led to the loss of control by the Department of Education.

5.1 THE BUYING AND SELLING OF POSTS IN EDUCATION

The Ministerial Task Team used media allegations about the buying and selling of posts as a focus for discussions with District Managers and Teacher unions in each Province, asking

⁶³ Mention has been made in Chapter 3 of NATU's avoidance of meeting the Task Team.

them for their responses to general and specific instances which the *City Press* and other sources provided. Individual allegations were followed up, individuals interviewed, and follow-up meetings were held with informants. Then the forensic members of the Task Team, drawn from Deloitte & Touche as well as the Department of Justice, investigated those instances which are contained in this Report.

What is most striking is the extent to which most of the allegations of wrongdoing and irregularity reported to the Task Team have proved incapable of verification or confirmation. Similar difficulties appear to have faced, for example, by the investigators in the NEXUS Report from the North West Province, SADTU national's earlier investigations, those instances which the Gauteng Department of Education pursued and now, those that the Task Team sought to verify.

Based on submissions to the Task Team and the data from interviews, there is no reason to believe that any Teachers' Union as an organisation is involved in the buying and selling of posts in education. However this conclusion does not exonerate Union members either individually or in various formations from using undue influence of varying kinds to affect appointments to posts in education, a practice which is universally acknowledged to be endemic.

The Task Team is convinced that there is common knowledge of such malpractice in schools, offices and communities. Various superficial explanations for the difficulties in getting hard evidence were offered to the Task Team by the District Managers and Teacher Unions, but serious concern remains about the state of professions and societies where malpractice is tolerated and unchecked. We are faced by (a) a culture of silence about wrongdoing; (b) a situation where malpractice has become normal; and (c) people having to work and live in a climate of fear.

From its meetings with the South African Council of Educators, the Task Team was led to believe that the SACE investigation would yield hard and fast instances of malpractice in

Umlazi, KZN and in Mpumalanga. Inexplicably, SACE has produced nothing of use for the Task Team.

Since the Task Team has not been shown the final SACE Report, we suggest strongly that the Minister requires SACE to provide copies of this Report to her.

5.2 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION AND TEACHER UNIONS

The Department of Basic Education has retained semblances of managerial and administrative control in three of South Africa's nine Provinces. These are the Free State, the Western Cape and the Northern Cape. In all other Provinces, SADTU is in de facto control. According to the data given to and gathered by the Task Team, this domination by a Union has been achieved by using combinations of the following ways and means:

- through its history as a sector of the liberation movement;
- by being an industrial and adversarial trade union;
- by means of its incorporation of office-based educators as members;
- its use of a repertoire of strategies to coerce teachers, principals, officials and others to accede to its demands;
- by using teacher militancy to pressurise its members to be unionists first and professionals second;
- by practising cadre deployment to ensure that high percentages of managers, decision-makers and others with power and influence in education are placed in well-paid positions where they can prioritise the Union's interests;
- by using of undue influence at different stages of the appointments process to ensure that its candidates are appointed;
- by holding out the possibility for its prominent members to receive opportunity to achieve high office in the Department, Parliament and the Cabinet;
- by blocking Departmental activities and programmes; and

- using its membership of COSATU to influence the members of the Tripartite Alliance.⁶⁴

Nowhere are these ways and means stated explicitly as SADTU policy. In fact, based on their submissions to the MTT and their public utterances, there is evidence that SADTU has publicly condemned the practice of selling of posts and therefore as an organisation is not directly involved in these practices. But that does not mean that on the ground, in actual practice, in specific Provinces and in specific areas of activity, members of this organisation do not exercise inappropriate forms of influence and control.

It should be noted that the list of means, a number of which have become ends, omits reference to SADTU's work in building increased professionalism among teachers, nor is there inclusion here of any of the work by SADTU to lift and improve the levels of South Africa's ineffectual and weak education in schools.⁶⁵ These dimensions of SADTU's role, what the Task Team regards as the proper actions of an occupational Union for educators, on the basis of the interviews the Task team conducted, have been overshadowed by its manifold uses of power and influence. The irony is that now SADTU and other Unions and not the Department actually hold the education system together in most Provinces.

A further question which has arisen for the Task Team is whether SADTU is now primarily an educational organisation or not? Is the excessive exercise of power and control over the education system compatible with its supposed function of servicing the profession and protecting the material interests of its members?

The NEEDU National Report 2012 Summary (p.24) says:

The Mangaung Policy Conference of the SANC noted that the government capacity in Basic Education, in large parts, shows signs of incompetence, corruption, ill-discipline and irregularities in employment and promotions. The Diagnostic Report of the National

⁶⁴ This is not a history of Unions or of SADTU, but a collection of strategies which SADTU is known to employ. For a history of Teacher Unions, see Logan Govender. Teacher unions, policy struggles and educational change, 1994-2004. In Linda Chisholm. 2004. *Changing Class: Education and Social Change in Post-Apartheid South Africa*. Cape Town: HSRC Press, pp 267-291, and Logan Govender. 2015. Teacher unions' participation in policy making: a South African case study. *Compare* vol 45:2 pp. 184-205.

⁶⁵ SADTU's stance with other Unions on ANA is an example of its direct concerns with educational quality.

Planning Commission characterized these conditions as symptomatic of civilizations in decline.

This leads to a focus on the Department as a whole, where there are a number of concerns to which the Task Team's attention has been drawn.

Since 1994 there have been myriad changes of leadership of Ministers, MECs, HODs and the like. When all the names across 20 years are added up, the sum is more than 80. This figure immediately raises questions about stability and continuity.

The Task Team is aware that the process of dismantling apartheid in education has made tough demands on civil servants who have sought to build a new system that is designed for structural justice rather than inequality.

But the effect of such brief and varied terms of office has meant that no fresh or indigenous traditions of management and administration have been established. Each new MEC and HOD has his and her bright idea by means of which they hope to make their mark over a short period. This means that there is little opportunity or intention to build on what has gone before.

Little work appears to have been done over the period of 20 years to establish strong, efficient and effective District and Circuit Offices. The relative weakness of these vital parts of the educational system has allowed cadre deployment to populate its ranks with individuals who are tend to be Union loyalists first and administrators second. This situation has allowed the Unions to use undue influence to the extent that the Department of Basic Education has lost control of two-thirds of the country.

The absence of home-grown traditions in the Department as an entity is echoed by the way in which SADTU has adopted an industrial model based on serving workers in factories and

the mines. SADTU ought to be an occupational union such as that for nurses.⁶⁶ Furthermore, it must be asked why the relationship between the Department and the Unions has to be adversarial when their common cause is the transformation of the education of the young.

Conflict between Department and Union is rarely over policy, it is over power and control. This has significant implications. In this process, the educational heart of Unions has been lost, as is the case, to a lesser extent, with the Department itself. It is in this context that things are going wrong and creating crises. The Task Team accepts fully the differences between the interests of the Department as the employer and the roles that Unions should play on behalf of their members. But in South Africa there are bigger issues for us all to address. Instead, for example, of using 'transformation' as a pretext for gaining control of schools and offices, there should be joint and co-operative efforts to address the manifold challenges and developments that are desperately needed in our education system. The Task Team is appalled at the degree to which relations between the Department and the Unions are essentially conflictual, where the real interests of educators and learners are consequently unattended to.

If, for example, undue influence is now a dominant way of achieving one's goals, and that using this method as a teacher has become normal practice, then obtaining a desirable position through bribery and corruption is a naturalised and normalised procedure. After all, that is how things are done. The environment has become a corrupt one.⁶⁷

The logical conclusion of the analysis in this section is that 'undue influence', a polite name for corruption, appears to be endemic to greater and lesser degrees in the entire educational system, in offices, in schools, Unions and everywhere else. Weak authorities, aggressive Unions, compliant principals and teachers eager to benefit from Union

⁶⁶ This was suggested to the Task Team by Professor Eddie Webster of Wits University, an expert in union matters.

⁶⁷ Speaking at the 9th Bram Fischer Lecture at the University of Johannesburg on 4 September 2015, Beatrice Mtetwa, internationally recognised human rights lawyer from Zimbabwe, declared that "corruption has become the base of the entire [African] continent".

membership and advancement are a combination of factors that defeat the achievement of quality education by attacking the values of professionalism.

Owing to the pervasive implications of cadre deployment, the Task team has sought to think through what the impact of this is being on education in South Africa.

The more generic term for South Africa's practice of cadre deployment is 'patronage-based political appointments'. Teacher unions, especially SADTU, have developed the capacity to offer their members who display especial loyalty and activism in the Union's interests opportunities for appointment to well-paying and influential posts in public schools and Departmental offices.

The practice of cadre deployment has a history. South Africans are not alone or the first to use systems of patronage-based appointments. The practice in Britain was rife 150 years ago⁶⁸ and in the United States between 1800 and 1920 all government jobs were controlled by party bosses and public officials.⁶⁹

Here in South Africa the ANC used patronage and deployment from 1994 to stabilise control in the civil service and to dismantle practices saturated with apartheid's purposes and functions.⁷⁰ And that has applied to education as much as to the other branches of the civil service. However, it has been asserted that after 1999 the ANC began placing its trusted and loyal members into powerful and financially rewarding positions, a practice which is said to have led to losses of competence in key areas of state enterprises when the appointments were not based on suitable experience and skills.⁷¹

As a member of COSATU and thus a member of the Tripartite Alliance, SADTU has achieved access through the ANC and the Communist Party to positions in Parliament and Cabinet.

⁶⁸ Jonathan Hyslop. Political Corruption: Before and After Apartheid. *Journal of Southern African Studies*. 31 (4): p. 777.

⁶⁹ Terry Moe. 2011. *Special Interest: Teacher unions and America's Public Schools*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press p. 33. Quoted in Patillo (2012) p. 23.

⁷⁰ Sylvia Neame 2015. *The Congress Movement*. Pretoria: HSRC Press, vol 1, p. xxx.

⁷¹ Kathleen Patillo. 2012. *Quiet Corruption: Teacher Unions and Leadership in South African Township Schools*. Thesis, Wesleyan University, Connecticut, pp. 77-78. See too Neame *op. cit.* pixie.

The commitment of a Teacher Union to one single political Party is both dangerous and inappropriate. This means that those educators who join that Union are bound to that Party. And the fortunes of the educational system become dependent on the fortunes of a political process.⁷² While the Party is in power, the Union has a kind of political sanctity i.e. to challenge the Union is to challenge the Party. It is not difficult to see how that can lead to corrupt forms of influence.

At Provincial levels however, SADTU uses its influence to deploy its preferences as principals at schools and as senior officials in the Department. The criteria for selecting those for such appointment are not necessarily about competence and professional suitability but about militancy.⁷³

When questioned, officials and senior educators claim that they are able to distinguish between their obligations to the general public and their loyalty to their Union or political Party. This cannot but be problematic when they occupy high positions in the Union and/or the Party. Evidence received by the Task Team calls into question such glib distinctions.

Cadre deployment in the South African education system is a salient factor in the creation of an environment which accommodates corruption. Cadre deployment appears also to have weakened the education system because people without the requisite skills, abilities and commitment now serve in key areas of the system or else give more attention to organisational matters than their jobs as office-based educators. The likely impact upon those not so chosen is (a) to increase their disruptive Union activism and militancy so as to qualify for deployment; (b) to be demoralised classroom practitioners and professional administrators; and (c) to be encouraged to adopt values of material greed, personal advancement and aggressive competitiveness.

⁷² Relation between the largest teacher union and a political party in Mexico is a frightening example of teachers being swallowed by corrupt political agendas. See Govender (2004) and Patillo (2012).

⁷³ The Task Team was informed that 85% of senior posts in the North West head office are SADTU members. Research (2011) has stated that 65% of school leaders in Umlazi are SADTU cadres. All Ekurhuleni District Managers are SADTU members. One hundred percent of Deputy Director-Generals in the DBE consists of active SADTU members. These are merely indicative figures.

Arrogation of the right by Unions to appoint and disappoint educators is a form of corruption and which generates chaos. In such a context high degrees of irregularity are bound to occur, in which the buying and selling of posts is a minor but reprehensible practice.

Some commentators pose the dualism of 'militant unionism' against 'professionalism'. This is a gross simplification as most binaric propositions are. But this matter urgently requires clarity about what is meant and intended by 'professionalism', without which the discussion about alternatives to rampant Union domination in education will not have a sufficient basis for useful thought and decision-making i.e. policy.

This Report has already asserted that domination by Unions has been made possible by the feeble and dilatory condition of Districts and Circuits. There is no doubt that this has permitted Unions to move into areas in which they have no business. But now, through the inexorable creeping of cadre deployment, these sectors of government are as subject to undue influence as every other sector.

The question has to be asked why has SADTU, for example, adopted a form of union which is based on an adversarial and industrial model. Why, it must be asked, does the Department of Basic Education have to be regarded as a capitalist exploiter of labour with employees who are regarded for the purposes of action as members of the working class? Teachers are not members of the working class. How can Departmental Managers (Union members deployed there) be the enemy? Are the apparent differences between union members and managers real or illusory? There is a distinct element of the absurd in this sorry situation in which the quality of South African schooling is demonstratively abysmal.⁷⁴

In its attempts to reach into the heart of these matters, the Task Team was confronted by what must be described as SADTU's defensiveness.

⁷⁴ This is to say that the academic performance of South African learners is very poor in itself and in comparison with what is being achieved by schools in Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland.

In reporting the alleged incidents of the buying and selling of posts in education, the media in general and the *City Press* in particular have been blunt in blaming SADTU as an organisation for being involved in such practices. It is no surprise therefore that the SADTU representatives at provincial level would be defensive in describing their attitude to such allegations.

For example, SADTU in KZN declared that its dominance in the Province is now being used “to dislodge us”, whereas the reason for the frequency of SADTU appointees to posts is that these applicants are “stronger” than the others. Allegations against SADTU are designed, they said, to inhibit SADTU’s contribution to education. The Task Team was also reminded by this delegation that SADTU regards itself as sharing responsibility for the quality of teaching and learning in the schools as well as for ensuring quality in the Districts.

These are very large claims, putting SADTU on a par if not above the Department in the Province. Such assertions speak to SADTU’s excessive view of its own importance and to the weakness if not feebleness of the Department. As a guardian of the Province’s ‘quality’, SADTU cannot be corrupt, so this implies. We know this to be neither logical nor true.

In the North West, SADTU representatives echoed the KZN rationale for the super-abundance of its members in appointments by arguing that (a) it is logical for the biggest Union to fill most posts, and (b) that the SADTU applicants are trained and empowered for their posts by the Union and thus are most likely to be appointed. If this is the case, then it should be asked why cadre deployment is so necessary a tactic.

SADTU Limpopo argued that if the country’s rulers i.e. their compatriots in the Tripartite Alliance, felt that SADTU misuses its powers, they would ‘clip its wings’. Instead, SADTU advanced the position that it uses its power to advance the best interests of its members in a wholly responsible manner only.

SADTU Limpopo suspects that the media campaign, the views of certain academics and the Task Team’s investigations are ultimately intended to weaken the ruling party. And, finally,

it is the view of SADTU Limpopo that the cadres who fought and achieved SADTU's ascendancy and who advance it as a political entity should be those who have priority for appointment. The Task Team finds such rationalisations unpersuasive.

The impressions created by the interviews held by the Task Team point directly to a major question. This is about the desirability and appropriateness of the adherence of Teacher Unions to a political party. All educators will and should have their convictions about politics and the parties which articulate best their priorities and concerns. But what has to be brought into question is the overt and emphatic support by a Union such as SADTU of a single political party.⁷⁵ It is obvious to all observers and commentators that such adherence has a major influence on the Union's priorities and strategies. The effects that have become apparent are not good for education, the retention of the confidence of communities or the professionalisation of educators. And the irony is that such militant adherence seems to have contributed to an environment in which improper actions are possible if not sanctioned because of particular forms of political loyalty.⁷⁶

5.3 SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES AND THEIR FUTURE

In concluding the commentary in Chapter Four on the voices of the Unions, comprehensive examples were offered of attitudes towards and concerns about School Governing Bodies (SGBs). (Pages 114 to 134.)

It was notable to the Task Team how, instead of analysing themselves and/or each other as part of the problem of the shortcomings in the system of educator appointments, District Managers and Teacher unions were inclined to deflect attention from themselves to the weaknesses and inadequacies of SGBs.

⁷⁵ See Logan Govender. 2015. Teacher Unions' Participation in Policy Making: a South African Case Study. *Compare* 45.2, pp. 184-205 in which examples of teacher-state relations are drawn from Mexico, Uganda, Malawi and Benin. The example of what has happened in Mexico is particularly relevant to the South African situation.

⁷⁶ The emergence of the SA Liberated Public Sector Workers' Union is likely to complicate this aspect of education further. 'New public servants' union aims for 100 000 members'. *The Star* November 06 2015.

It is true that District Managers and Union representatives were mildly critical of each other at times, but this was never deep or comprehensive enough to provide any analytical basis. Both were more than eager, however, to offer suggestions for ways in which SGBs could be improved, strengthened and given greater capacity so as to carry out successfully the tasks of selecting candidates for appointment.

There at least three accounts as to how and why we in South Africa have unique, democratic bodies in a system of education that otherwise is hierarchical and riddled with rank.

One version is that in the 1980s, the (white) Transvaal government was faced by a financial shortfall. To avoid having to retrench 3 000 (white) teachers, it was proposed that the state create different models of school – A, B, C – with differing degrees of independence and financial arrangement.⁷⁷ Model C schools, for example, would have their staff complement paid by the state but all other funds would have to be raised by the school itself. In return, such schools would be allowed to open their doors to learners and teachers of all ‘races’ provided that the current (white) parent body agreed. Most urban English-medium middle class schools opted for Model C. They became fee-paying institutions, thus saving the state significant amounts of money.⁷⁸ To replace the old-fashioned governance structures of these schools, School Governing Bodies were established by the South African Schools’ Act which delineated their powers, which are extensive.

The second version of the genesis of SGBs is rooted in the People’s Education for People’s Power movement of the 1980s which established Parent-Teacher-Student –Associations (PTSAs) at ‘liberated’ and mainly black schools. These PTSAs and later SGBs became a way of moving away from the notoriously compliant School Boards of Bantu Education.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Model A would have made state schools completely private; Model B would have remained state schools with the right to admit up to 50% of Black students; Model C created state-aided schools which received 75% of their funding. Salim Vally & Carol Anne Spreen. The School-Community Nexus in South Africa. *The School as Community Hub: Our Schools/Our Selves*. Special Issue, Summer 2010, pp. 125-144.

⁷⁸ Clive Roos interview, Cape Town. 08 July 2015.

⁷⁹ See. Peter Kallaway. 2002. *The History of Education Under Apartheid 1948-1994*. Cape Town: Pearson Education South Africa, pp. 174-190.

The third version is that SGBs were supported by the liberation movement as part of the “sunset clause” of the early 1990s to ensure that whites remained in the education system by giving ‘their’ schools powers to select the medium of instruction (of great importance to white Afrikaners), to appoint staff and to manage their own finances.⁸⁰

This intertwined historical account of SGBs opens up the question of what their future ought to and might be.

There was very little recognition of the historical nature of SGBs by both District Managers and Teacher unions. They wanted to deal with the urgent issues of the present.

The bureaucrats, including HODs and MECs, want to reduce the powers of SGBs whereas the Unions want SGBs to continue to play a major role in the appointment process. The difference here is one over access to control of influence over promotion, senior and principals’ posts. Is this in fact a disguised power struggle? If so, any attempt by the Department to reduce the powers of SGBs will result in major conflict. Different Unions will have their different agendas for opposing the reduction of SGB controls, but the resistance will be acute. For example, at the interviews with the Task Team, the SAOU threatened that should powers be removed from SGBs, there will be a mass movement by (white) Afrikaners into private schooling. SADTU on the other hand, has a powerful tradition of democratisation and one reason why it is likely to resist the reduction of SGB powers is the reduction of important democratic rights. The Task Team is aware that the Department has been withdrawing certain powers, such as the appointment of principals in certain Provinces. Whether this is based on decisions taken at Head Office is unlikely as individual MECs and HODs gave the Task Team the impression that was a local decision and therefore did not have to be negotiated through the ELRC.

The Task Team cannot offer an opinion on whether the Department (as Districts or Provincial headquarters) will do a better job of managing appointments than the SGBs do. But given the neglect by or inability of Provinces to capacitate SGBs and given the ravages of

⁸⁰ These and other powers are enshrined in the South African Schools’ Act.

cadre deployment there is little to encourage one about the Department's sense of responsibility or capacity in this matter. However, if independent selection panels are constituted to make recommendations for appointment, especially of principals, then there is a greater likelihood of appointments being made on professional and no other grounds.

But it must be pointed out that shifting the responsibility for recommending promotion posts from SGBs to the delegated structures of the Department is not enough to counter the rampant corruption at all levels in the education system. In investigating the implications of the buying and selling of posts in education, the Task Team has been exposed to the extent and depth of difficulty in purging the system of corrupt practices. Neither the Unions nor the Department is able to address this adequately alone.

The Task Team became aware that in some Unions there is an interest in discussions over changes to SGBs. That thoughtful attitude arises from their awareness that circumstances today are not the same as those twenty years ago. This line of thought needs to be followed up.

The Task Team's analysis of the situation of SGBs cannot be completed without comment on how shamefully SGBs and their potential as mediators between schools and communities have been neglected and overlooked. Yes, a quasi-democratic system which is accountable only to the school community is an awkward entity for bureaucracies to live with. But the opportunities for SGBs to play a fully supportive role for communities and in schools have not been taken advantage of. It is recommended strongly that as a start to remedy this situation, the Minister looks into the 2003 Crane Soudien Report into school governance which Minister Kader Asmal commissioned but never released.

5.4 SOME FACTORS WHICH HAVE LED TO LOSS OF CONTROL BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

At one stage in the Task Team's thinking about conditions in the educational environment that appear to create opportunities for malpractice in the filling of posts, its members wondered whether the pervasive corruption and malpractice in the country as a whole

might encourage forms of undue influence in the recommendation and selection of candidates for appointment and promotion.

For example, could the relative weakness of the Department both nationally and provincially and the strength of the Unions create conditions that make it seem acceptable for individuals and groups to buy and sell posts? But whereas the answer to this question is “Yes”, this level of enquiry does not go far enough in the analysis of the situation.

Such thought produced two questions:

- What factors have led the Department to lose control of education? and
- Why is the education system failing to provide adequate or even rudimentary schooling for all of South Africa’s children?

Whereas the Task Team by definition cannot attempt adequately to answer such questions, its responses to them open up lines of thinking. These questions have led, for example, the view that the Department of Basic Education has never had a real chance or opportunity to succeed in its endeavours to control and manage the educational system and provide the education needed by South Africa’s learners.

It should be noticed that this diagnostic analysis does not seek to accord blame for the state of education. The Task Team’s purpose is not the indictment of anything or person. Nor is the Task Team seeking to expose failings or shortcomings as the purpose of its work. Indictment does not provide a way forward. Individuals and organisations which have acted in a corrupt manner are being and will be made to answer for their deeds. However, instances of corruption of various kinds are only one aspect of the education system’s deficiencies.

Instead of making moral judgements, the Task Team has come to the conclusion that since 1994, the Department has never had a real chance to succeed in transforming education in South Africa. Therefore there is a need for the state to undertake a complete overhaul review (no matter how long it takes) of the entire system of schooling in South Africa.

Education places an enormous burden on the South African population and the economy. The current system is not producing people with abilities that will allow them to flourish in the 21st century. The country cannot afford to go on in this way. New and fresh thinking is required, thinking that proceeds from an understanding of the inadequacies and possibilities inherent in the present situation so as to move on to shape and express a different educational paradigm. Indicative factors which have it impossible for the Department to create and control a fully productive and equitable system of education are:

- There is no commonly-agreed philosophy of education which has replaced the apartheid-oriented 'Christian National Education'. Teacher education institutions, office and school based educators, schools, provinces and others all work from their own notions of knowledge, of the development of the young, of education and society and of the nature of a society that would be appropriate. Those 'notions' are rarely articulated or debated. What is needed is a general, comprehensive and simple vision of education in this country. That vision should be the foundation of which instruction are based.
- Instability caused by frequent changes of personnel at the highest levels.
- The imposition of outcomes-based education on all public schools had a profoundly disorienting effect on everyone, robbing teachers in particular of their previously acquired skills. Teachers lost confidence in themselves and, significantly, in the Department. However, it must be recognised that the Department has made strenuous efforts to stabilise the approaches to teaching and learning so as to restore the confidence and capacity of teachers.
- Handing over the education and training of primary school teachers to universities has led to very serious problems in the education of the very young. For our purposes here, it must be noted that one effect of this change has been that primary school teachers do not 'belong' to the Department, but are products of institutions which have autonomy. So these teachers have no reason to be loyal to an entity that does not even appoint them, since the SGBs do that. These teachers develop a loyalty to their schools and to the Unions which they join, not to the Department.

- Disproportionate focus on the matriculation examination, leading, for example, to (a) insufficient attention to Early Childhood Development; (b) neglect of infrastructure such as toilets, libraries and classrooms; (c) failure until recently to check the drop-out rates in the senior grades.
- The deployment of officials to the Department from Unions weakens the Department because those so deployed are not there because they have professional intentions or even abilities but are placed there as reward.
- The present education system, with powers that are delegated from the national office all the way to School Governing Bodies makes this a difficult system to manage and control. What means are there for establishing and maintaining a flexible coherence which gives South African education a distinctive and particular quality?
- Finally, the “elephant in the room”. Owing to the factors listed above and other causes, Teacher unions have captured significant areas of the education system. This ranges from the most senior levels to new teachers in public schools. Six of the nine provinces are under control by the Unions. The effect of this is to contribute to the Department’s inability to control and develop an effective educational system.

There also needs to be an acknowledgement of factors beyond the Department’s control, such as unemployment, poverty and the manifold and destructive historical legacies.

5.5 SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR A WAY FORWARD

So as to provide a practical beginning to the process of the revision of education, the Task Team offers the following for consideration and debate:

- Find ways on convincing the Department and the Unions that they have a common cause which does not require an essentially adversarial relationship.
- Act vigorously against those who transgress professional codes, who are corrupt and who employ undue influence through cadre deployment as well as the failure to carry out policies and regulations.
- Re-open colleges of education for the education and training of primary school teachers as a dimension of the *Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa (ISPFTED) 2011-2025*.

- Centralise key aspects of the education system.
- Curtail the practice of cadre deployment.
- Develop an appropriate philosophy of education for all in the system, including the SGBs.
- Capacitate SGBs as agents which link schools and communities.
- Work towards changing Teacher unions from being industrially-oriented entities to becoming occupational unions that are not adherents of political parties.

It must be recognised that the evident problems and challenges in our present system of Basic Education cannot be resolved through piecemeal actions alone. Current thinking about these matters points to the need for a parallel process by which the entire system is revisioned, thoroughly and over time.